

DIARRHEA

The body gets rid of waste through bowel movements. Every person has a pattern that is normal for him or her, whether the person moves his or her bowels once a day or every three days. The bowel movements should be soft, formed, and it should not hurt or cause bleeding.

When waste products or stool move rapidly through the intestines, it allows for less water absorption by the bowels, and therefore the stool has more liquid in it. This is **diarrhea**, and it involves frequent, loose bowel movements.

Symptoms of diarrhea:

- Several bowl movements (more than two or three in a short time)
- Watery or liquid stools
- Cramps in the belly
- Tenderness of the belly
- Increased gas
- Decreased appetite
- Stools may be an abnormal color, such as greenish
- Stools may have an unusually bad odor
- Irritation or burning of the rectal area

What can cause diarrhea?

- Taking in more fluids
- Some medications, such as laxatives, antacids, and antibiotics
- Stress
- Infections
- Problems digesting certain foods, like lactose
- Eating more high-fiber foods, such as corn or beans
- There may be instances when an individual is severely constipated and liquid stool moves around the hard, formed stools, giving the appearance of diarrhea or oozing.

What Should You Do?

Call 911 if the person appears:

- Gravely ill
- Gray in color
- To have large amounts of blood in their stools

In other situations:

- Consult their orders for laxatives and consider holding that day's dose.
- Write down what you see.

